

Economic Sustainability Plan: Implementation and Next Steps



Completing the Plan

July –
Interim Presentation

December –
Final Presentation



Engagement - Research – Vetting Strategies – Comment Period

What does the Plan include?



Technical analysis
documenting real estate,
economic and
sociodemographic
trends for the region



A guide for
development of target
industries



Action Plan Matrix
with strategies and
implementation



Resources for ongoing
work, partners, and
technical assistance

What We Heard

- Locational advantage for business
- Great opportunities as lifestyles shift to retain and attract 25–35-year-old cohort
- Brownfields, greyfields development potential
- Evaluating and communicating value of non-traditional economic development assets – green space, lakes, recreational trails
- Green/clean technology reaching across all industries
- Housing crunch is significant barrier to retaining population → impacting businesses
- Economic growth priorities: coordinated with housing and employment, appropriate scale
- Regional approach critical to implement the plan

Groups Engaged

- Steering Committee
- Regional Stakeholders
- Technical Advisory Committee
- Digital Engagement
- Business Survey
- Direct Business Outreach
- Youth Collaboration

What This Plan Will Achieve

Our Collective Goals

1. Reinforce the Highlands Region as a center of natural resource protection innovation and technology.
2. Communicate the value of quality of life in the Highlands Region and evaluate how current assets meet, miss, or exceed market demand.
3. Expand awareness and understanding of the New Jersey Highlands Council's purpose and impact on the business community.
4. Strengthen the role of the New Jersey Highlands Council as leader in regional planning assistance.
5. Support the Highlands Region's existing target industries and small businesses in their efforts to thrive and adapt in response to the new economy.

Sustainability Means Business Longevity

This plan connects sustainability to the concept of business longevity and seeks to build economic sustainability so that a business will be able to:

- Expand employment for high quality, good paying jobs
- Innovate to the latest in technology uptake
- Adapt to climate change as needed for their sector
- Attract appropriate workforce for its operations
- Remain competitive in their sector
- Localize or regionalize their supply chains

Goal #1

GOAL

Reinforce the Highlands Region as a center of natural resource protection, innovation and technology.

RATIONALE

As natural resource protection and green technologies become a greater part of the public awareness, the Highlands Region can be an effective testing ground for new and innovative technologies that could lead the way in other parts of the U.S.

Goal #2

GOAL

Communicate the value of quality of life in the Highlands Region and evaluate how current assets meet, miss, or exceed market demand.

RATIONALE

The Highlands Region has many advantageous features that contribute to a desirable quality of life for many people. Continuing to advocate for and maintain those assets, as well as addressing where gaps or challenges exist, will strengthen the region's ability to retain and attract top talent.

Goal #3

GOAL

Expand awareness and understanding of the New Jersey Highlands Council's purpose and impact on the business community.

RATIONALE

While the Highlands Council is well known for resource protection and land preservation, the implications of this work on the business environment needs to be explicit in all the Council's material. The Highlands Council's value proposition must show a positive correlation between the protection of natural resources and a healthy *economic* environment.

Goal #4

GOAL

Strengthen the role of the New Jersey Highlands Council as leader in regional planning assistance.

RATIONALE

The Highlands Council offers a suite of planning tools and expertise to municipalities and awareness about these tools should be more prominent throughout the Region.

Goal #5

GOAL

Support the Highlands Region's existing target industries and small businesses in their efforts to thrive and adapt in response to the new economy.

RATIONALE

Each target industry meets a set of criteria that indicates the strong propensity of that sector to grow based on the assets and resources in the Highlands Region. However, other regions in the U.S. and around the globe are organizing workforce, sites, and incentives to attract companies within the Highlands historically significant industries. Retaining these companies will sustain a stable and healthy economy, support small business and entrepreneurship, and fuel vibrant community centers throughout the region.

How can local communities leverage the Plan?

- The Highlands Council has professionals available that can assist with GIS analysis, planning or technical assistance.
- Staff from the Highlands Council are available to meet with municipal officials to talk about land use regulations that support natural resource protection and economic development.
- The Highlands Council has funds available for:
 - Supporting sustainable agriculture
 - Local economic development plans
 - And more!

Outreach & Implementation

- Presented at Northwest New Jersey Rivers Conference.
- Roadmap for counties and municipal EDCs to achieve their own efforts of economic sustainability and diversity.
- Marketing “roadshow” for the Plan.
- Acting on prioritized actions with allocated budget.
- Highlands Council as ambassadors for sustainable economic development.